



Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Hepatitis B

What is Hepatitis B?	<p>Hepatitis B (HBV) is a liver disease caused by a virus. The number of new infections per year has declined from an average of 260,000 in the 1980s to about 78,000 in 2001 due to the Hepatitis B vaccination. The highest rate of the disease occurs in 20-49-year-olds.</p> <p>It is estimated 1.25 million Americans are chronically infected with Hepatitis B, and 20-30% acquired their infection in childhood.</p>
What are the symptoms?	<p>About 30% of persons have no signs or symptoms. Signs and symptoms are less common in children than adults. Among the possible symptoms are jaundice (yellowing of the eyes or skin) , fatigue, stomach pain, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, and joint pain.</p>
How is Hepatitis B treated?	<p>HBV infected persons should be evaluated by their doctor for liver disease. There are three drugs licensed for the treatment of chronic hepatitis B. These drugs should not be used by pregnant women. Drinking alcohol can make your liver disease worse.</p>
How do people catch this disease?	<p>The spread of Hepatitis B happens when blood or body fluids from an infected person enters the body of a person who is not immune. It is spread through having sex with an infected person without using a condom, sharing needles, needle and other sharp exposures on the job, or from an infected mother to her baby during birth. Persons at risk for HBV infection might also be at risk for infection with hepatitis C virus (HCV) or HIV.</p>
What can be done to stop the spread of this disease?	<p>There is a vaccine to prevent Hepatitis B that is required for all children in order to attend school in South Carolina. This is the best way to prevent the spread of the disease. Other ways to reduce the risk include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are having sex, but not with one steady partner, use latex condoms correctly and every time you have sex. The ability of latex condoms to prevent infection with HBV is unknown, but their proper use may reduce transmission. • If you are pregnant, you should get a blood test for hepatitis B. • Do not shoot drugs; if you shoot drugs, stop and get into a treatment program; if you can't stop, never share needles, syringes, water, or "works", and get vaccinated against hepatitis A and B. • Do not share personal care items that might have blood on them (razors, toothbrushes). • Consider the risks if you are thinking about getting a tattoo or body piercing. You might get infected if the tools have someone else's blood on them or if the artist or piercer does not follow good health practices. • If you have or had hepatitis B, do not donate blood, organs, or tissue. • If you are a health care or public safety worker, get vaccinated against hepatitis B, and always follow routine barrier precautions and safely handle needles and other sharps.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Region 7

Serving Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties

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